

# SIP Cover Sheet

<b>California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan</b>	
<b>County:</b>	Sierra
<b>Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:</b>	Sierra County Human Services, Child Protective Services Division
<b>Period of Plan:</b>	October 1, 2004 – September 30, 2005
<b>Period of Outcomes Data:</b>	(1) Quarter ending June 30, 2003
<b>Date Submitted:</b>	(2) September 30, 2004
<b>County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan</b>	
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<b>Submitted by each agency for the children under its care</b>	
<b>Submitted by:</b>	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
<b>Name:</b>	William Demers
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Pete Villareal
<b>Signature:</b>	



## Sierra County SIP Narrative

### Local Planning Bodies

Sierra County Social Workers regularly participate as members of various boards, committees and treatment teams. They have presented the various outcome measures and systemic factors of the self-improvement plan to these groups during meetings held in August and September. The following is a list of those local stakeholders consulted during the course of self-assessment and development of the SIP.

- County Health Department      Stephen Hall, Deputy Director  
Donna Metzler, PHN  
Janis Hardeman, PHN
- County Mental Health Department      Stephen Hall, Deputy Director  
Lynn Lane, CSOC Coordinator  
Melody Graves, Casemanager
- County Alcohol/ Drug Department      Stephen Hall, Deputy Director  
Gunnar Ellsmore, Substance Abuse  
Counselor
- CalWORKS –WTW      Donna May, Deputy Director  
Mary Thompson, Employment Services Worker III
- CalWORKS – Eligibility      Donna May, Deputy Director  
Lori Wright, Eligibility Supervisor
- County Office of Education      Mary Genasci, Superintendent
- Sierra Plumas Joint Unified School District      Mike Filippini, Superintendent  
Penny Berry, School Principal
- County Probation Department      Pete Villareal, Chief Probation Officer  
Rebecca Kinkead, Probation Officer
- Child Abuse Prevention Council      Lynda Dickman, Executive Director  
Ann Werner, Social Worker III and Council  
President
- Multi-Disciplinary Team      Ann Werner, Social Worker III, Coordinator  
and Chairperson  
Anne Berardi, Social Worker III, Alternate  
Anne Berardi, Social Worker III, Liaison
- ALERT team
- Kids R Stars (First 5)      Gloria Wyeth, Executive Director
- Family Outreach      Lynda Dickman, Executive Director
- Toddler Towers Child Care Center      Pamela Filippini, Director
- CDSS Adoption      Patti Conlin, MSW Adoption Worker

## **Findings that Support Qualitative Change**

Self-Assessment activities and Self-Improvement Plan development for Sierra County has involved collaboration from community partners and local boards in a variety of ways. Primarily, input has been obtained informally at meetings and in multi-disciplinary team groups. There exists continual dialogue between Child Welfare Services and our partners in the community. CWS Redesign efforts yielded information and some of those work products were included as attachments to the Sierra County Self-Assessment document. Suggestions made and input received during recent meetings have been incorporated in completion of the Self-Improvement Plan.

## V. Summary Assessment

### ***C-CFSR OUTCOMES***

- 1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.*
- 2. Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.*
- 3. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.*
- 4. The family relationships and connections of the children served by the CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.*
- 5. Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional and mental health needs.*
- 6. Children receive services appropriate to their educational needs.*
- 7. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.*
- 8. Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.*

### **A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvements**

Sierra County is one of California's smaller rural northeastern counties. The geographical area encompasses 959 square miles with a population of 3,555. Poverty and unemployment are well above the state average and the 2000 Census shows the County with 830 children under 18 years of age.

In 2002, Sierra County's rate of children with referrals for child abuse and neglect was at 78 for the year with an average of 6.5 referrals per month.

County specific demographic factors that impact abuse, neglect and reunification rates are: high unemployment rates, substandard housing and a lack of appropriate housing, high rates of substance abuse and addiction, high mental health statistics, and a high transient rate and adoption of alternative lifestyles. In 1999, ALERT was formed by county agencies which work with children and families to work together to share the responsibility for children, assessing strengths and needs, and providing services to each family and children in order to keep children safe, healthy, at home, in school and out of trouble.

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The advantage of a small county such as Sierra is that those of us who work in CWS know the families we work with on a somewhat personal level. We have a closer, more familiar association in that we meet them in the local grocery store, markets, restaurants, churches and service stations. Our children attend schools and sports events together. In many ways, this is positive for both our clients and those of us who work in CWS. Neighborhood and family are important and in times of near-peril, such as the flood in January 1997, we all pulled together for the good of the community. There is an attitude of care and concern for all and a commitment to keeping Sierra County a wonderful place to raise our children.

Because of these close associations, there is a heightened awareness of the children and families in our communities. With close scrutiny of the child abuse statistics, you begin to realize that the families known to CWS have remained fairly constant over the last few years. It is also important to note that these families have received constant attention and services and some have, over the years, changed or lessened those habits and patterns of abuse.

Community is Sierra County's strength. Sierra County is a massive geographical county with small, rural communities at every juncture. The heart of most of these small communities is their school. As an asset to families and children, the school personnel are the lifelines for many of these children. Most children spend a large part of their day in school and the teachers are aware of issues when they arise. In fact, most abuse reports or reports for welfare checks come from school personnel.

Sierra County CWS works closely with the school system to monitor the safety and well-being of children. CWS also has a very positive working relationship with Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, Law Enforcement, Probation, and the Court.

By utilizing community resources and family, we are more able to provide permanency and stability for children by placing them with family members and non-relative extended family members when there is a need to remove them from their families. This provides children with connections to their community, family, mentors and extended families and by training for a community wraparound mindset we should be able decrease reentry into foster care. Services are limited in Sierra County but they are not non-existent. Services are sometimes not conventional but none the less provide for adequate physical, emotional and mental health needs. Schools, Mental Health and Drug Alcohol, Public Health, WIC, CalWorks, Sheriff's Department, Probation and CWS work together to provide services as needed from therapy to well-baby visits to training and support. Transportation is often provided to allow families to access services.

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Families who are stuck in this place of “hopelessness” and who strike out at their children in frustration need our efforts, understanding, care and coordination of services to shore them up and give them hope for the future. It is the belief of Sierra County Child Welfare Service staff that parents love their children and do not want to harm them.

The county’s creative use of contracts has expanded available services for both children and parents.

The county is continually looking at new ways to offer services and involve other agencies and our community based organization in the care of the community’s at risk children. Sierra County CWS would like to offer more comprehensive ILP services to foster youth. This has been a challenge in a small county with few resources, no local community college and few eligible youth in any given year. Other areas to be improved are more consistent data entry in CWS/CMS and assuring that visits to children in placement occur in a timely manner.

#### **B. Areas for further exploration through the Peer Quality Case Review**

Sierra County CWS is open to peer quality case review and collaboration. This could be particularly helpful in areas where the County is looking at ways to strengthen existing programs. Having staff from other counties, with successful programs to come in and assess our County’s programs could provide impetus for change. Staff from other counties having more knowledge of the CWS/CMS computer system could assist in trouble shooting difficult aspects of the application.

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<b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b> Safety 2B - Percent of child abuse /neglect referrals with a timely response					
<b>County's Current Performance:</b> At the time the Self-Assessment Plan was written, 0% was shown for Sierra County Q2 and Q3.					
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b> Improve referral response time.					
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Develop a process to better track the date and time each referral is actually received in the Department/Agency.			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> Referrals are often received by telephone or verbally in person from a third party. Initial information often is incomplete and insufficient for entry into CWS/CMS. Since, as a very small County, there are only two Social Workers for all CWS activities, the worker receiving the referral is likely to be involved in another case conference or out of the office at the time the verbal referral is received. They may in fact be called away before they have an opportunity to share the limited information with another Social Worker or Supervisor. In Sierra County it is possible the information will come first to another member of the Human Services agency on-call team before being relayed to the CWS Social Worker.		
Milestone	<b>1.1.1</b> Discuss the current situation and need for timely response to referrals with Social Workers and other Human Services clinical staff	Timeframe	1 month (October 2004 clinical staff meeting)	Assigned to	Social Worker III
	<b>1.1.2</b> Develop a policy and adopt a brief referral response form such as ER Protocol and a log for use outside of CWS/CMS.		2 months (November 2004)		Social Work staff at a unit meeting
	<b>1.1.3</b> Review data and track progress.		Supervisor to find County specific data and review progress by January 2005.		Deputy Director
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Communicate fully and consistently with co-workers to alert them to the receipt of a referral and inform them about progress of referral investigation and any next steps.			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> Workers are often called away or have prior obligations. Others may have to cover and might be questioned about the referral. They will need information before it has been entered into the automated system or might not have access to CWS/CMS. See above statement.		

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor



Milestone	1.2.1. Follow-up with mandated reporters to obtain written reports sooner.	Timeframe	immediately	Assigned to	All Social Workers
	1.2.2 Train on-call team and begin using referral policy, form and log (1.1.2 above)		December clinical meeting		Social Worker III
Notes:					

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b> Shorten the time between the receipt of the referral, the completion of the referral response and when the referral and response information is actually entered into CWS/CMS by the Social Worker and approved in CWS/CMS by the Supervisor.					
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Obtain complete information sooner.				<b>Strategy Rationale</b> <sup>1</sup> Often the initial referral information is insufficient to start a referral in CWS/CMS.	
Milestone	<b>2.1.1</b> Use referral form outside of CWS/CMS to gather basic required data elements (1.1.2 above)	Timeframe	December 2004	Assigned to	All Social Workers and Clinical staff
	<b>2.1.2</b> Follow-up with mandated reporters to obtain written reports sooner.		Immediately		All Social Workers
	<b>2.1.3</b> Use support staff to make inquiries on other automated systems and to place follow-up calls for any routine information needed.		November 2004		Deputy Director & Clerical Supervisors
<b>Strategy 2.2</b> Make Data entry of referrals part of a set routine.				<b>Strategy Rationale</b> <sup>1</sup> Phones, co-workers and clients often interrupt Social Workers.	
Milestone	<b>2.2.1</b> Offer Social Workers protected time for data entry.	Timeframe	As soon as practical after gaining approval and support from others.	Assigned to	Deputy Director
	<b>2.2.2</b> Obtain approval and support from other Agency managers and supervisors for the protected time.		December 2004		Deputy Director

	<b>2.2.3</b> Conduct training for support staff to better recognize any urgent calls and to make the distinction about when to interrupt the Social Worker or when to take complete messages during a referral report and/or protected time.		January 2005		Clerical Supervisors and Social Worker III
<b>Strategy 2.3</b> Train support staff for data entry.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> <sup>1</sup> Social Workers are frequently out of the office. Other support staff can be trained to enter basic referral information more timely.		
Milestone	<b>2.3.1</b> Obtain approval and support from other Agency managers and supervisors for the assignment of data entry duties to support staff.	Timeframe	December 2004	Assigned to	Deputy Director
	<b>2.3.2</b> Arrange training dates in County		January 2005		Deputy Director and SSC
	<b>2.3.3</b> Plan regular meeting dates with SSC for technical support and information. Arrange coverage and protected time for these meetings to limit interruptions.		November 2004		Deputy Director and SSC
<b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b> Obtain the approval of the Agency Director, other Supervisors and Managers for shared responsibility of clinical crisis on-call team members in obtaining consistently complete referral information on a timely basis and for assignment of support staff to data entry. Assess the need for and complete request forms and other processes for additional CWS/CMS equipment in support staff offices.					
<b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b> Request and schedule CWS/CMS basic training on-site for support staff. Have regular monthly meetings with SSC for technical assistance.					
<b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b> Clinical crisis on-call staff will work to refine referral process. Other agency staff willing to training and accept additional supportive assignments.					
<b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b> None					

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

<b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b> Safety 2C – Timely Social Worker visits with child					
<b>County’s Current Performance:</b> During the study period, Sierra County’s performance was initially shown as 0%. Revised reports show rates ranging from 0% to 33.3%.					
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b> As stated in our Self-Assessment Plan, hand counts show that Social Workers have been compliant with monthly home visit requirements. Either visits have been completed or waivers are in place. The County improvement Goal for this factor is to improve data entry results.					
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Determine the causes of data discrepancy.			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> Sierra County can demonstrate that Social Workers are making the required monthly home visits. The reasons why the visits are not reflected in the data are undetermined at this time and possible explanations merit further examination.		
Milestone	<b>1.1.1</b> Review data entry requirements for AB636 as contained in ACL # 03-61	Timeframe	1month - review at unit meeting with all Social Workers	Assigned to	All Social Workers and Supervisor (Deputy Director)
	<b>1.1.2</b> Review training materials received in recent training and call other experts for possible explanations and additional resources.		1 month - review at unit meeting with all Social Workers		All Social Workers and Deputy Director
	<b>1.1.3</b> Call Help Desk for assistance available to dedicated County.		After data entry requirements have been reviewed, if there continues to be a data integrity problems.		ATM/Deputy Director and SSC
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Improve data entry into CWS/CMS.			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> Although Social Workers are making visits and recording them in CWS/CMS, the results are not showing in the outcome measures.		
Milestone	<b>1.2.1.</b> Train Social Workers on any changes to data entry process.	Timeframe	Within 1 month of discovery of any process changes needed.	Assigned to	Supervisor or outside trainer as needed.
	<b>1.2.2</b> Use protected time and support staff to improve quantity and quality of data entry (see strategies for Safety 2B)		December 2004		Social Workers

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

	<b>1.2.3</b> Review outcomes to determine level of improvement.		January 2005		Deputy Director
<b>Strategy 1. 3</b> Frequent and thorough Supervisory review of cases (both hard copy and in CWS/CMS).			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> <sup>1</sup> Supervisory review will determine when case work and data entry occurs. Consistent expectations should generate improved performance once training has occurred and sufficient time for data entry is allotted.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.3.1</b> Supervisory will allot time to case reviews.	<b>Timeframe</b>	Monthly – beginning in December 2004	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director
	<b>1.3.2</b> Reviews will include hard copy case and any informal notes and records that demonstrate compliance as well as the case record in CWS/CMS.		Monthly – beginning in December 2004		Deputy Director
	<b>1.3.3</b> Review outcomes to determine level of improvement.		Monthly - Beginning January 2005		Deputy Director
<b>Notes:</b>					

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

As Social Workers and Supervisor take more time for data entry, more formal ways of interacting with other staff to minimize interruptions and distractions will have to be found.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

Specific training in any corrected procedure to ensure that visits with children are accurately recorded and reflected in CWS/CMS.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

The SSC for our County, trainers and help desk will provide expertise in CWS/CMS to identify data integrity problem areas. Support staff and Supervisor will support Social Workers to schedule and maintain protected time.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

none

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

<b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b> Child and Family Well-Being 8A – Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood						
<b>County's Current Performance:</b> 100% - All eligible foster children were served in the study period. 2- received ILP services and 1- employed or other means of support						
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b> Although Sierra County has very few youth eligible for services in this category at any point in time, community partners chose improving services to foster children transitioning to adulthood as a focus area or goal of the Self- Improvement plan.						
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Identify existing resources and services and update resource lists periodically.				<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> Social Workers should be aware of currently available resources and services from community partners when developing an individualized plan with a youth. However, because there are so few foster children to serve in our small population and the workers arrange these services infrequently, they might fail to include all available services in the TILP.		
Milestone	<b>1.1.1</b> Meet with community partners to discuss needs of children transitioning to self-sufficient adulthood.	Timeframe	Completed several meetings during Sept. 2004.		Assigned to	Social Worker III (2)
	<b>1.1.2</b> Identify existing services to children that might be redirected and also creatively used to benefit and include foster youth transitioning to self-sufficient adulthood.		Meetings during Sept. 2004 and continuing monthly thereafter.			Community partners and Social Worker III (2)
	<b>1.1.3</b> Include ILP services as a regular agenda item for discussion and progress reports to MDT, ALERT and SARB at regularly scheduled meetings.		monthly			Community partners and Social Worker III (2)
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Improve data entry in CWS/CMS				<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> The TILP documents in the automated system may not be populated with all required data to provide complete information about scope of services for foster youth.		

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

Milestone	1.2.1. Review data entry process for TILP and review cases in CWS/CMS to determine degree of problem and corrective action needed.	Timeframe	November 2004	Assigned to	Deputy Director and Social Worker III
	1.2.2 Arrange training for Social Workers to improve data entry to reflect full scope of services provided to foster youth.		January 2005		Deputy Director
	1.2.3 Review outcomes to determine level of improvement.		February 2005		Deputy Director
Notes:					

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

As noted in SIP templates for Outcomes 2B, 2C and Systemic Issue A, the cooperation of other personnel in the agency is needed to support Social Workers with uninterrupted blocks of time to be used for improved data entry into CWS/CMS.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

Social Workers will be requested to review web- based training. Supervisor will seek assistance from SSC and arrange additional in-county training as needed to ensure that TILP service plans are completed properly in CWS/CMS and reflect all services provided to foster youth.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

Community partners who have been helpful in this area include the Superintendents of County Office of Education and the School District and their school site administrators and counselors. Also, MDT members, other Human Services Agency clinical team staff and the Child Abuse Council will continue to discuss needs of children transitioning to adulthood and identify existing, new or creative use of resources and services at their regular meetings.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

none

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

<b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b> Systemic Issues A – Management Information Systems					
<b>County's Current Performance:</b> Sierra County's Self- Assessment Plan accurately describes the current performance in Management Information Systems in the following statement. " Due to the complexity and inconsistency of CWS/CMS Sierra County staff is struggling to meet the full utilization requirement. Data entry is time consuming and difficult. Sierra County Social Workers have made direct service to clients and case management activities a priority over extensive detail in data entry." The information addressed in SIP outcomes 2B and 2C relate to this systemic issue.					
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b> Make data entry less time consuming					
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Streamline the processes for collecting data.			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> See outcome measure 2B for details		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> Referral process changes noted in 2B.	<b>Timeframe</b>	2 months	<b>Assigned to</b> All agency staff	
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Give data entry a higher priority			<b>Strategy Rationale<sup>1</sup></b> See 2B		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.2.1.</b> Emphasize the importance of having complete information prior to data entry.	<b>Timeframe</b>	2 months	<b>Assigned to</b> Social Workers and Agency staff	
	<b>1.2.2</b> Offer and support the use of protected time for data entry.		As soon as agreements are reached		Agency staff
	<b>1.2.3</b> Have additional support staff learn CWS/CMS.		3 months		Deputy Director
<b>Notes:</b>					

<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b> Make data entry less difficult					
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Identify areas for additional training in CWS/CMS.			<b>Strategy Rationale <sup>1</sup></b> Greater familiarity with the more complex and inconsistent areas of the automated system should assist the Social Workers in identifying where problems in data entry are likely to occur.		
Milestone	<b>2.1.1</b> Review data entry requirements	Timeframe	2 months	Assigned to	Social Workers and Supervisor
	<b>2.1.2</b> Request Social Workers to tell Supervisor or others who might be able to assist when they encounter a problem while using CWS/CMS.		Immediately and on-going		Social Workers and Supervisor
<b>Strategy 2. 2</b> Train staff			<b>Strategy Rationale <sup>1</sup></b> Include support staff who might become proficient in data entry along with the Social Workers who need training on updates to CWS/CMS.		
Milestone	<b>2.2.1</b> Encourage use of training materials available through web- site and provide updates at Social Worker unit meetings.	Timeframe	Monthly	Assigned to	Supervisor
	<b>2.2.2</b> Use other resources such as SSC and Help Desk when appropriate.		As needed		Social Workers and other data entry support staff
	<b>2.2.3</b> Seek regular formal training provided by CDSS and the CWS/CMS project.		annually		Supervisor
<b>Strategy 2.3</b> Use protected time for Social Workers			<b>Strategy Rationale <sup>1</sup></b> Allowing the Social Workers time to complete tasks without interruption will reduce frustration as confusion and circumstances where data is lost before it can be saved in the system.		
Milestone	<b>2.3.1</b> Enlist support of other staff	Timeframe	2 months	Assigned to	See 2 B – Agency Staff
	<b>2.3.2</b> Create a schedule with individual workers		As needed		Social Workers and Supervisor
	<b>2.3.3</b>				
<b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b> See above					



<b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b>
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See above and other measures in SIP
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<b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b>
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Other staff within the agency will be critical to the success of the Social Workers by learning the importance of the data entry and the Social Worker function in meeting safety outcomes for children.
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<b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b>
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none
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<sup>1</sup> Describe how the strategies will build on progress and improve this outcome or systemic factor